NLP

Practitioner Course

Module 7 –Strategies

Contents

Module 7 - Strategies

Definition:

In NLP a strategy is a series and sequence of internal and external representations which consistently produces the same specific result.

Strategies can also be said to be like the 'programs' we use to run our neuro-linguistic 'computer', and the results we get are like the outputs of those programs.

In simple terms, a strategy is a sequence of steps, much like a recipe, that we run through automatically in order to achieve a specific outcome.

Easy analogy: a strategy is the person's "recipe" for achieving a particular outcome - for getting from the present state to a desired state. Change the ingredients, or the steps, and you get a different result. For example, when you go somewhere, you may be making a picture of where you're going and how to get there in your mind. Then you may need to gather enough information until you have a clear picture of the entire route that you're going to travel.

We first develop a particular strategy when we are young. At an early age, perhaps you put a series of internal and external experiences together, and made (for example) a decision. Then, at some point when you knew it worked, you generalized the process that you used before in making the decision and said, either consciously or unconsciously, "OK, this is a good way to make a decision", and you then probably used it over and over and over again.

Let's say, for example, you made a picture in your mind and talked to yourself or someone else about it, until you had enough information, and that was how you made the decision. If that syntax worked for you, then at some time you began to use it over and over again.

NLP was created as a result of Modeling. Bandler and Grinder's system for Modeling was essentially to discover somebody's belief systems, physiology, and mental strategies. In the process of modeling, they would elicit a person's internal program, which they called "mental syntax" or "strategy." In terms of modeling, then, one important element is the internal syntax or what they do inside their head when they do what they do. What strategy do they use?

Simply put: A strategy is something that somebody does in their brain and nervous system that produces a specific result. It's what somebody does in their head when they do what they do.

An analogy that seems to work really well in describing strategies is the analogy of baking a cake. In the process of baking a cake, you get all the ingredients together, get a bowl, and you put the ingredients into a bowl in a certain order. It's important to take all the ingredients and put them in a bowl in a certain order. In a recipe, there's a certain order or sequence of when the elements should go into the recipe. And so, if you put the elements of the cake into the bowl in the wrong order, or even in the oven before you put them into the bowl, you'll get a substantially different outcome.

In other words, the recipe would be broken down into a number of steps such as:

Gather ingredients

Pre-heat the oven to required temperature

Combine the ingredients in a specific manner

Bake in the oven for a specific length of time

Remove from oven and allow to cool

Apply decoration

If you missed any of the steps or changed the order of the steps you wouldn't get the desired outcome of the cake, right?

And even though you might not realize it people have recipes or strategies for every type of behavior including:

Delight
Depression
Shyness
Evaluation
Motivation
Procrastination
Decision making
Wealth
Poverty
Love

Strategies can be simple or can be quite detailed and complex and yet, amazingly, people carry out these sequences repeatedly and perfectly without any significant awareness that the process is even taking place.

In NLP the label given to these unconscious, automatic and consistent sequences of behaviors is Strategies. More commonly people describe this phenomenon using a different word – habits, and divide their habits into two main categories – good habits and bad habits.

When people talk about good habits they are usually referring to habits which result in a positive or useful outcome for them. Conversely, bad habits are generally considered those which yield negative or undesirable outcomes.

People often feel good about their good habits, actively perpetuate them and take credit for them and the outcomes that arise from them and thus place themselves at the empowering cause side of the cause / effect equation.

People are often less willing to take responsibility for their bad habits and instead they objectify the habit so that they can identify it as the cause of the negative or undesirable results that they themselves are producing. This behavior is disempowering as the person is left at the effect side of the equation, where their outcomes are the effect of outside causes over which they believe they have no control.

Richard Bandler might ask 'Who's driving the bus?' and the answer is 'You are!'

The presuppositions of NLP tell us that we are in charge of our own mind and hence our own results, so we each need to recognize that we are driving our own bus.

Once we accept responsibility for our own results we move ourselves from the effect side of the equation to the cause side of the equation and we are empowered to make useful changes to our behaviors. The ways in which we can modify our strategies to enhance the results that we produce is limited only by the imagination.

Early strategies

When working with strategies in NLP it's important to break the strategy down into appropriately sized and organized chunks.

Most strategies operate below the level of awareness and people perform what can sometimes be quite complex sequences of behavior without any conscious recognition that they are doing so.

To begin to understand why this is so let's consider some of the strategies which you yourself employ just to understand the words on this page.

When you were a baby you didn't even know what words were, let alone how to speak or read them. Your main method of communication was your in-built ability to cry in order to let the world know when you were unhappy with something.

Air from your lungs passed over vocal chords resulting in a noise designed by nature to elicit the immediate attention of your care givers.

In many ways that first strategy - cry until attention is received / needs are met was the seed of subsequent strategies for communication.

Gradually you became more aware of your surroundings and of other people. You began to listen to the sounds other people made and to pay close attention to the shapes and movements of their mouths as they made these sounds. You began to practice making other sounds with your own mouth, developing strategies for using particular configurations of lips, teeth and tongue to make particular sounds. You learned how you could vary your breathing and change other aspects of the sounds you were making such as the loudness, speed and pitch.

You began to understand that particular groups of sounds put together in particular combinations were associated with things around you, and developed strategies for putting the sounds together in the correct sequences (words) and associating them with the correct objects, and for retrieving from memory and vocalizing those words when presented with the connected object at some later time.

You came to recognize that other people (usually bigger than you) would present an object to you and repeat the word associated with the object and you could then use all the strategies you'd developed so far to speak that word, remember it and to remember the object that was linked to that word. Gradually over time you learned to do these things with greater speed and precision, building up your vocabulary all the time. By age 18-24 months you probably had around two hundred words in your vocabulary.

You spent two years of your life developing some of the strategies required to communicate verbally and linguistically with another human being. Now, take a few quiet moments to consider the following question.

Cast your mind back to the last conversation you had with another human being. As you go back to that time now step into your body, see what you saw at the time, hear the sounds around you and feel the feelings of being right there having that conversation. Notice the expressions on the face of the person you're having that conversation with. Here's the question - while

you are having that conversation now, how much conscious awareness do you have of using the strategies you spent two years learning?

The likelihood is that in the normal flow of conversation, even though you're still running the strategies described above, you have no conscious awareness of them whatsoever.

Those strategies have become so integrated into your neurology that they've dropped below the level of awareness and you execute them with the unconscious competence referred to in the four stages of competence.

If you're not convinced, next time you have a conversation with another person try to think consciously about how you're going to use your lips, teeth, tongue, breathing etc. to make each of the individual sounds required to speak the words you're going to use to respond to that person.

Can you do that, and maintain the conversation at a regular speed and keep abreast of what the conversation is about? Probably not as it's been shown that the maximum number of chunks of information that a human being can pay attention to consciously at any one time is seven, plus or minus 2. Which is why it's a good thing that the human brain is capable of processing a whole bunch of stuff, like running our behavioral strategies at the unconscious level.

By the time they reach two years of age the average human being has mastered the strategies required to communicate using spoken language.

At around the same stage of our development we are introduced to a collection of twenty-six symbols built up from collections of lines both straight and curved.

When a person draws our attention to one of these symbols they usually also make a particular sound with their mouth. We make use of the listening and speaking strategies we've already learned to associate the sounds with the corresponding symbols and to speak the sounds ourselves, until the symbols and sounds become anchors for each other - thinking about the symbol makes us think of the associated sound, and vice-versa.

We go on to learn that these symbols and their associated sounds form the building blocks of the strings of sounds (words) we've already learned to speak - *A is for Apple, B is for Ball, C is for Cat...*

With strategies in place for recognizing letter shapes and their associated sounds (phonemes) and that some phonemes consist of multiple characters (i.e. *ch*, *sh*, *ph*) we go on to develop strategies for decoding strings of characters (words) into their corresponding auditory representations (sounds). At first we read out loud so that those who are teaching us can assist us as fully as they are able. As our reading strategies and skills

mature we find that we need not vocalize the words as we read unless we are reading to other people.

And I'm very glad that you learned all of those strategies because now you are able, to read all the words on this page, and every other page on this website and to learn, really learn and integrate now all of this knowledge in ways that will assist you usefully in the days and weeks ahead.

What we can do with strategies

Elicitation: discover a person's strategy for achieving a particular outcome.

Utilization: feeding back information to the person in the sequence that suits their strategy, e.g. utilizing a person's buying strategy in sales.

Change: changing a strategy to make it better at achieving the desired outcome (or to make it less effective at achieving an unwanted outcome).

Installation: installing a new strategy if the person doesn't have one for that desired outcome.

Modelling: we can model other people's effective strategies to learn a skill for our own benefit or to teach others.

Types of strategies

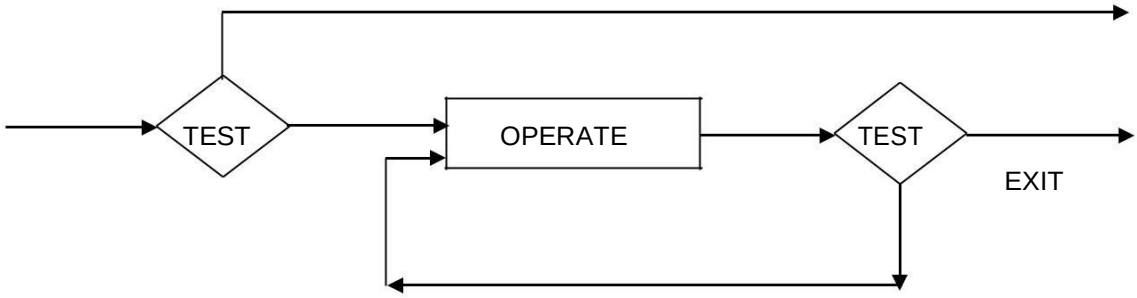
We have strategies for everything we do. We have strategies for things we are good at, and also for our problems - and everything in between.

As mentioned before, we have strategies for:

Wealth	Poverty	Motivation	Procrastination	Fun
Love	Illness	Decisions	Buying	Exercise
Boredom	Relaxation	Self-control	Anger	Stress
Success	Learning	Spelling	Creativity	Reassurance

... and everything else we do.

T.O.T.E. Model of Strategies



The first **Test** is a cue or **trigger** that begins the strategy. Essentially, "Have we achieved our goal yet?"

The **Operation** is a series of steps (remembering, constructing or operating on internal representations, external sensing, or actions) aiming to get closer to the goal.

The operation may have other strategies nested within it as 'subroutines'.

The second **Test** is a comparison of some result of the Operation with the criteria established by the first test to find out if we are at our goal yet. The two things compared must be represented in the same representation system.

The **Exit** depends on the results of the second Test. If there is a match (goal achieved), the strategy exits. This chunk of activity is now complete.

If there is a mismatch (goal not achieved), the strategy loops round and repeats the Operation.

The T.O.T.E. (Test, Operate, Test, Exit) model comes from *Plans and the Structure of Behavior* published in 1960 by George Miller, Eugene Galanter and Karl H Pribram.

Strategy Elements

So, how do you discover someone's strategy for doing a specific thing? Well, just ask, and listen to their predicates, watch their eyes (eye patterns), and make note of the order and sequence of the modalities as they are presented to you.

The steps within a strategy are external or internal representations - V, A, K, O, G, and internal dialogue or Auditory Digital.

V = Visual
A = Auditory
K = Kinesthetic (feelings) O = Olfactory
G = Gustatory

In addition, we can say certain things about those Representational System elements:

e = External i = Internal
t = Tonal (At)
d = Digital
c = Constructed r = Recalled

As you listen and watch the person you're eliciting the strategy from, note first the major modalities -- [V], [At], [K], [O], [G], [Ad]. Also make note of whether they are internal or external. For example, seeing a picture in your head is Visual Internal (or Vi), looking at a car to see if you like it is Visual External (or Ve), and may include a comparison to a remembered or created car (Vr or Vc).

Talking to the salesperson, and gathering information about the purchase to find if it meets your criteria is Auditory digital (or Ad), and External. Or feeling a rug to discover if you like the feel is Kinesthetic external (or Ke), while feeling good about the purchase is Kinesthetic internal (or Ki).

Making sure that your shorthand notation for each step of the strategy includes the distinction of whether it's internal or external, we make a superscript, "e" for external and "i" for internal. And when dealing with auditory, you want to make the differentiation between auditory digital [Ad] or auditory tonal [At]. Digital includes lists, criteria -- whether it "makes sense", whereas tonal is more concerned with whether it "sounds right". Make a subscript of "t" for tonal or "d" for digital.

You will want to note the elements in the order they occur. And, it's OK to ask over and over again until you have a strategy that you can be confident about.

Steps in Eliciting Strategies

First Test: How do they know when to start running the strategy? What starts it off?

Operate – What is the sequence? What is the representational system of each step, and what are the submodalities?

Second Test – How do they know if they have succeeded? What tells them they have to go round again?

Exit – When do they stop running the strategy?

Procedure:

1. Get into rapport and set the frame, as much as you need to.

2. Get the person associated into a time when they were doing the strategy: due to state-dependent memory you may need to ask questions like "What is it like when you X?" or "How do you X?" to get them to the point where they can remember a specific time.

3. Get the first Test, and the steps in the Operate stage. So you ask "What's the very first thing that makes you X?" or "What tells you to start Xing?" Keep asking "Then what happens?" until the strategy loops round or exits.

A more in-depth explanation would be:

Establish rapport and set the frame	1. What I'd like to do now is to ask you some specific questions which will help understand how you achieve certain results. Would that be all right with you?
Get the person into the state you are eliciting by using the appropriate language and context	2. Can you recall a time when you were totally ……?
Make sure that the person is in a fully associated, intense and congruent state. They must be looking through their own eyes.	3. Can you recall a specific time? As you go back to that time now, see hear and feel what you did in that moment.
As they are in the appropriate state, anchor it if necessary so that you can get it back whenever you need it – especially if you're breaking their state by asking questions	*4. Anchor the state if necessary*

Elicit the modalities. Calibrate all accessing cues: predicates, eyes, breathing, tonal shifts etc. and note the steps you observe	5. What was the very first thing that caused you to be totally ……? • Was it something you saw or the way you were looked at? • Was it something you heard or someone's tone of voice? • Was it the touch of someone or something or an emotion you felt? • Or something else?
Continue to elicit the modalities for each step and note these	6. After you (saw/ heard/ felt) that, what was the very next thing that happened as you were totally ……? • Did you picture something in your mind? • Say something to yourself? • Have a certain feeling or emotion?
Backtrack if necessary if you think you've missed any steps	7. What was the next thing that happened as you were totally ……?
Loop through 5, 6 and 7 till you have the complete strategy	8. After you (list previous), did you know that you totally ……, or did you do something else?
Test. Make sure you elicit and not install (use neutral predicates)	9. Feed the sequence back and calibrate for congruency
Watch for loops (recurring sequences that do not make progress)	
If necessary, go back and elicit the sub modalities	

Informal Strategy Elicitation

Strategies can be determined in casual conversation. For example by asking, "How did you *decide* to buy that shirt?" – for decision strategy.

Other questions to ask to Elicit Strategies

1. Has there ever been a time when you felt totally motivated? (motivation).
2. Think of a time where you felt totally resourceful? (resourceful)
3. Tell me about a time when you knew that you were completely unstoppable, when you knew you couldn't fail (powerful).
4. Think of a time when you felt that you were totally in 'the zone' – where everything flowed and you made great progress in what you were doing (in the zone).
5. Has there ever been a time when you were particularly creative?

(creativity).

6. Can you tell me about a time when you were able to do ……? (a skill).
7. What is it like to ……?
8. Can you ……? or How do you ……? or Have you ever ……?
9. Would you know if you could ……?
10. What happens to you as you ……?

Whether you're eliciting your own strategies or strategies that another person uses, the best time for strategy elicitation is usually right at the time it's being run.

One of the reasons why this is so is the fact that the person running the strategy will have full and vivid access to the Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic, Olfactory and Gustatory representations which make up the strategy and of the way they are sequenced.

If you're unable to elicit the strategy right at the time its being run then the next best source for strategy elicitation is a past vivid experience, ideally of the last time you (or the person you're eliciting from) ran that strategy.

Start by identifying the last time that strategy was run and then use the following simple script to assist the person to vividly imagine returning to that specific time in such a way as to access the fullest possible sensory recovery of that experience:

'*As you go back to that time now I want you to step into your body, see what you saw at the time, hear the sounds around you and really feel the all the feelings of being right there 'x'ing**'

* Replace 'x'ing with a brief description of what the person was doing i.e. *making that purchase* or *getting really mad* or whatever the subject of the strategy happens to be.

Once they have fully associated into that past vivid experience the next step is to begin to elicit the strategy with the following question:

'*What's the very first thing that has to happen so that you know it's time to x?*'

To ensure that the answer to the question includes the required sensory specific information, questions of the following type are useful:

Was it something that you saw?

Was it a sound that you heard or something that somebody said to you or something you said to yourself?

Was it a feeling that you had somewhere in your body?

Or a particular scent or the taste of something?

Be sure to ask all four questions to avoid overtly prompting the person to favor a particular sensory input to the exclusion of the others and hence contaminating the response. For example, asking *only* if it was something that the person saw could well result in them *only* paying attention to that particular sensory input in order to answer the question, to the exclusion of their other sensory inputs. If the most important sensory input for that step of the strategy was a sound or a feeling, then your focused question could yield an inappropriate or incorrect answer.

Once you get the first step note it down using the notation described above and then move on to the second step with further questions, i.e. *What was the second thing that happened?* or *What happened next?*

Continue the process to elicit each step of the strategy and, ideally, the exit point of the strategy* i.e. the completion of the purchase for a buying strategy or successfully putting off doing something until later for a procrastination strategy.

*Some strategies fail *because* they don't have an exit point - they simply loop round and round until they eventually break down somewhere in the middle.

Once you've completed the strategy elicitation process you should feel free to repeat the process as many times as you need to ensure that your elicitation is accurate.

Synesthesia Patterns

A synesthesia pattern occurs when two modalities are so closely linked they occur simultaneously, with one possibly being outside conscious awareness. For example, when someone hears a name and gets a feeling automatically or if someone smells something and gets an instant image in their mind.

A typical synesthesia pattern that many people report is saying something to themselves and getting a feeling at the same time.

Key Points in Eliciting a Strategy

Rapport is essential – otherwise the person may rapidly get frustrated with what seem like repetitive questions.

The TOTE structure: keep it in mind to guide your questions.

Unconscious competence: the person will not be consciously aware of the detail of how they do something. This is true for problems as much as for abilities. So:

- **They need to be associated** with a specific time when they used the strategy.
- **Observe non-verbal cues** including **eye patterns** as they go through the strategy – this is where most of the information is.
- **Expect the answer "I don't know"** because consciously, they don't.

Don't ask "why" unless you want information about their beliefs and values. We are usually more interested in when and where they do the strategy, how they do it, and what they actually do.

Go for process rather than content – otherwise you may end up getting bogged down in irrelevant detail

Follow the strategy in your mind: this will give you clues as to what information you don't have yet.

Feed their strategy back to them to check you have it right.

Backtrack as many times as you need to be sure you have the strategy correctly

NLP Strategy Notation

Representational Systems

V = Visual (Pictures)
A = Auditory (Sounds)
K = Kinesthetic (Feelings)
O = Olfactory (Smells)
G = Gustatory (Tastes

Superscripts

r = remembered
c = constructed
i = internal
e = external

Subscripts

t = tonal
d = digital

Examples:

V^r = Visual Remembered
A^r = Auditory Remembered
A^r_t = Auditory Tonal Remembered
K^r = Remembered Feelings
V^e = Visual External
A^c = Auditory Constructed
A_d = Internal Dialogue
K^e = Tactile Sensations

Syntactic Symbols:

→ = Leads to

/ = Comparison

⟶/⟶ = Synesthesia

⟶ m ⟶ = Meta Response (i.e. emotional) p = Polarity Response

——— = Simultaneous but not interfering

Examples:

Sequence: $V^e \rightarrow A^r \rightarrow K^i$

Test: V^e / V^r

Simultaneous remembered picture + feeling : $V^r \longrightarrow K$

Saying one thing & feeling the opposite: $A_d \longrightarrow / \longrightarrow K^i$

Saying something to yourself about something you've tasted:

$G \xrightarrow{m} A_d$

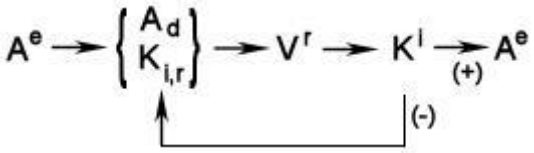
Inputting Visual & Auditory Simultaneously

$$\frac{V^e}{A^e}$$

In NLP strategies are documented using a simple notation which looks similar in form to that used in algebraic equations.

The notation illustrates the sequencing of the internal and external representations which make up the strategy in a simple linear format.

Let's look at an example:



This is a representation of a visual spelling strategy for a person called Pete. To explain what's going on let me break this down into individual steps and walk you through the entire process.

At each step I'll explain what's going on and then show the form of written notation for that step. Here goes:

1. The trigger for and very first step of a strategy is usually external to the person running the strategy. In this case somebody asks Pete to spell a particular word. This step is an ***A****uditory* ***e****xternal*, which is written in notation form as:

$$A^e$$

2. Pete repeats the word to be spelled to himself silently, in his mind. At the same time, he has a sense in his jaw of the mouth movements he would have to make to say the word in question. This combination of two sensory modalities firing simultaneously is known as a*synesthesia*. Add these first two steps together and we get:

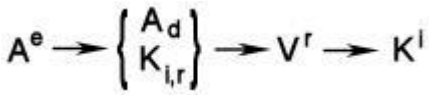
$$A^e \rightarrow \left\{ \begin{matrix} A_d \\ K_{i,r} \end{matrix} \right\}$$

The steps of the strategy are linked together by arrows showing the direction of the process flow. Braces are used to group representations which occur simultaneously.

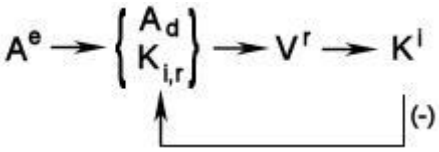
3. Pete recalls a picture of the word (***V****isual* ***r****emembered or* ***r****ecalled)* and can therefore see how it is spelled, which gives us:

$$A^e \rightarrow \left\{ \begin{matrix} A_d \\ K_{i,r} \end{matrix} \right\} \rightarrow V^r$$

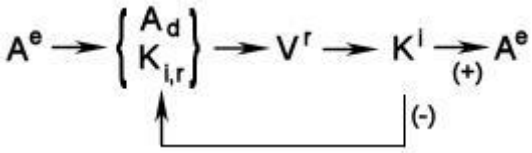
4. As Pete looks at the internally recalled image of the word to be spelled he notices his internal feelings (***K**inesthetic **i**nternal)* - he has feelings *about* the picture of the word and *about* whether that word is spelled correctly or not, which takes us to:



If Pete were to vocalize the **K**inesthetic **i**nternal feelings that he has at this stage about the **V**isually **r**ecalled image he might say '*It looks right to me*' or '*It just doesn't look right*'. If he thinks that it doesn't look right this happens:



As long as Pete's **V**isually **r**ecalled image looks wrong to him his associated feeling(s) are negative (signified by the minus sign adjacent to the arrow) and he loops back to step two of his strategy and continues the process from there until:



5. Pete gets a positive feeling (signified by the + sign under the arrow) about the **V**isually **r**ecalled image - he *feels* that it *looks* right and exits the strategy with an **A**uditory **e**xternal - he spells out the word verbally using the internally remembered image.
6.

Utilizing Strategies

So, you've elicited someone's strategy. Now what can you do with it? The first thing you could do is utilize it, by presenting information to them in the order and sequence they process information. If you've elicited the decision-making strategy that someone goes through when they are buying something, what that tells you is the order in which they like to gather information.

So if you're offering places on a workshop, if you find out in the course of a chat how a person decided to sign up for a previous workshop, then as

long as they liked that last **through the same strategy** workshop you would aim to **guide them** to sign up for yours.

If you find that they heard about the workshop and it sounded appealing, and they had a good feeling about the presenter, then came to a taster evening and really liked the people they met, you wouldn't give them the brochure and a load of research findings backing up the principles on which the workshop is based and then send them away. They've already gathered as much of that info as they need - what they want now is to get a sense of you, try out an exercise or two, and maybe talk to some people who've been on a previous workshop. **Make it easy for them to reach their decision by giving them the information in the way that suits their strategy.**

If you give them the information in any other order, it jars with their strategy and makes it harder for them to decide, plus the experience will feel wrong to them, making it more likely that they will bail out.

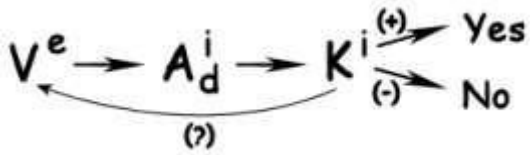
The workshop still has to meet their criteria, but you've made it easier for them to decide they want it. It's the same principle for motivation strategies, learning strategies, and any other strategy.

Put another way, once you've elicited a person's strategies you can utilize those same strategies to enhance your communication with that person.

Utilizing the other person's strategy as a framework provides a means for you to construct your communications in ways which are most congruent with that person's natural thought processes, which in turn leads to communication which is more effective and efficient for both parties.

The things that you say and the way that you say them literally fits the way the other person thinks.

To clarify let’s look how we might utilize a typical decision making strategy in a sales context. For our purposes here we'll assign this strategy to a person called John.

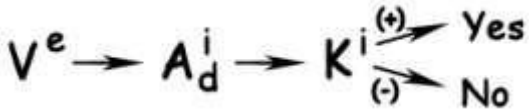


Let's break John's decision making strategy down and examine it step-by-step.

1. John sees something that he may wish to buy. This is the external trigger for and very first step of his strategy This step is a ***V****isual* ***e****xternal*, which is written in notation form as:

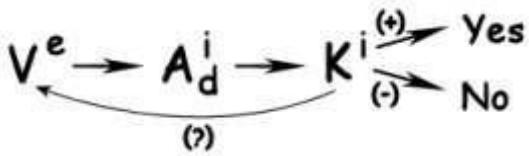
2. In the second step, while John is looking at the item in question he compares the features of the item in question to his selection criteria i.e. does the thing he's looking at have all the features he wants? He does this verbally and internally i.e. he talks to himself without vocalizing the words, which is ***A****uditory* ***d****igital* ***i****nternal*. Add these first two steps together and we get:

3. In the next step John reaches a point in the strategy known as a *decision point*. As a result of comparing the features of the item he's looking at with his internal list of selection criteria, John gets a feeling about this particular item (***K****inesthetic* ***i****nternal)*. If the feeling is positive John exits the strategy by making the decision to purchase the item. If his feeling is negative then he exits the strategy by deciding not to buy this item. This can be represented as:



What happens though if John decides not to buy this item, and there are more items available that he can choose from?

This question brings us back to the complete strategy:



If John's feelings are neither positive nor negative but rest somewhere in the middle his strategy loops back to the start - he starts looking at the next available item - and the strategy repeats until he either decides to buy an item or runs out of items to choose from.

As a keen sales person with knowledge of John's decision making strategy, we could increase the effectiveness and appeal of our communication with him by saying something like:

I see that you're looking for a new X. Let me show you some X's and, once we've run through the features of each one I'm sure we'll find the one that you're going to absolutely love.

Tailoring our communication to be maximally congruent with a person's strategies can enhance the effectiveness of that communication and increase the appeal that it has for the person we communicate with.

Changing Strategies

Design Principles

1. Follow the TOTE model.

2. Keep it simple - the change should be as small as possible to get the result. Larger changes are more likely to lead to unforeseen side-effects (bear ecology in mind).

3. Intervene at a point before the strategy goes wrong - it's easier to prevent problems than to try to clear them up after they've happened.

4. Use all three of the main rep systems (V, A - tonal or digital - and K). Different rep systems are good for tracking different kinds of information.

5. Change any elements that put the person into a sub-optimal state.

6. Make sure there is an exit after a certain period of time or a certain number of times round the loop.

Ways of changing strategies

Rehearsal with eye accessing cues

Dissociated state rehearsal

Reframing - e.g. "It takes 20 no's to get to a yes, so each 'no' is a step closer to the yes"

Submodality changes

Metaphor - tell a story which guides the listener through a series of steps analogous to the steps of the revised strategy

Use a chain of anchors to install a new step or remove an existing one

Design a New Strategy from Scratch

All of the above plus:

Use your own strategy if it works well (and is appropriate for that person).

Model a good strategy from someone else.

Make one up, taking into consideration their motivation strategy – toward or away.

Install a New Strategy

1. Rehearsing
2. Reframing
3. Metaphor
4. Anchoring
5. Dissociated state rehearsal

Motivation Strategies

People either move toward or away from things (meta program of Direction Filter). People who tend to move toward too strongly may never get around to doing unpleasant things which are necessary. Alternatively people who move away at an extreme may never take action until things get really bad. The key to motivation is to be easily and effortlessly able to do the things that may otherwise seem unpleasant but serve you.

Strategy chunking

When working with strategies in NLP it's important to break the strategy down into appropriately sized and organized chunks.

If you chunk too small when detecting / eliciting strategies you'll get bogged down in detail and complexity.

If you chunk too big the level of detail will be insufficient to successfully elicit and replicate the strategy.

How then do you know when you've chunked at the right level? That's a very good question!

As a rule of thumb most strategies can be described elegantly in about four or five steps. So if you have more than five steps/chunks the chances are that you chunked too small.

Say, for example, that you had been in the company of a person whom you considered particularly skillful in the art of public speaking and that you wished to elicit their strategy for doing this. Would the starting point of your strategy elicitation be to find out how this person uses their breath, lips, teeth and tongue to form the individual sounds which combine to form the words they speak, as discussed earlier in the Early Strategies section? If it were you'd be chunking too small because:

You already have an adequate strategy for that behavior which you run at the level of unconscious competence

The key aspects of the strategy that this person uses in order to communicate so eloquently are probably at a much higher level of abstraction i.e. a much larger chunk size

As we come at this from the opposite perspective things will become clearer.

If a strategy that you've elicited fails to produce the expected outcome when you run it, and that strategy has fewer than four steps, it's entirely possible that you chunked too big and thus missed details or steps vital to the effective operation of that strategy.

Using the example above let's say that you'd asked this person the very important question - '*How do you do that?*' and that their response was something like:

I think of some stuff to
say I say it
I bow when people applaud

Given these three pieces of information could you successfully utilize this person's strategy to replicate the same results that they produce? You could try. You could be very lucky and produce the same results which would suggest that the chunk size (3 chunks) in this instance was just right.

On the other hand, the results that you get could differ greatly from what you expected which would suggest that the chunk size is too large and more detail (in smaller chunks) is needed. In cases such as these Meta Model questions are a great tool for recovering the required level of detailed information.

For reasons of clarity in describing further how strategies work in NLP it's useful to consider a common example and break that down into its component parts so that we can understand it more fully.

The example that we'll consider here is a person's Buying Strategy purely because the buying process is likely to be one that most people are familiar with.

At the top level the Buying Strategy is broken down into four chunks:

Motivation
Decision making
Convincer

Reassurance
At step 1. a person becomes motivated to make a purchase.

Step 2. involves investigation of and selection from the available options.

The Convincer (step 3) lets the person know that this purchase meets their criteria at the point of sale.

Finally, step 4 is the means by which the person is subsequently reassured that they made a good purchase (or from another viewpoint, avoids '*buyer's remorse*').

At this level of abstraction these four chunks provide labels for the steps typically included in the buying process, but reveal very little detail about the underlying processes involved.

More detailed information is available by '*chunking down*' one level to reveal that the four chunks which constitute the 'Buying Strategy' are themselves composed of a number of chunks in the form of distinct, sequential steps. At this lower level the original four chunks, Motivation, Decision Making, Convincer and Reassurance, can be treated as individual strategies in their own right. These four lower level strategies are nested inside the higher level Buying Strategy.

The results obtained from the elicitation of a person's Buying Strategy are therefore likely to be more useful if chunked at the lower level of their strategies for motivation, decision making, convincer and reassurance.

Representational Systems

Characteristics

Direct representations contain the most information - so you're always going to get more information about a painting by having a picture of it rather than a feeling about it.

Digital descriptions are secondary experience - "a picture is worth a thousand words".

Auditory digital is useful for:

- Planning
  - Putting labels on experience
  - Summarizing
- Making sense of things

Auditory tonal can add emotional impact to internal dialogue or sound, and motivate or demotivate accordingly.

Visual is the fastest system, and can contain a huge amount of information in an instant. It can allow you literally to see the big picture, or zoom in on details. Moving pictures are better than still pictures for seeing consequences and predicting what could happen in the future.

Visual is useful for making decisions, because you can compare two or more options as pictures. This would be very hard to do with words, feeling or sounds.

Auditory processing, whether tonal or digital, is sequential - one word or note follows another - so it's slower than visual.

Kinesthetic is slower still, and has more inertia. Trying to change a feeling without using visual or auditory systems is like turning a tanker round.

Emotions, or 'Kinesthetic Meta' as they are sometimes known in the NLP jargon, are the main way that we evaluate experience. Unlike the primary kinesthetic sensations of proprioception (knowing where each part of your body is in relation to others), balance, and touch, they are responses to internal or external events as processed through our mental filters, and can be a response to remembered or constructed representations in other modalities as well as to primary experience.

You can change or create emotional responses through anchoring, submodality shifts, or reframes.

Motivation Strategies

People are motivated either towards something they like, or away from something they don't like. Towards, away-from, or mixed strategies can all work.

Away from motivation is undirected ("away" can be any direction) and it runs out quickly, as soon as you get far enough away from what you're escaping. Away-from strategies need to be focused around negative consequences of not completing rather than just getting away from the starting point.

Away-from motivation is inevitably stressful, because you are carrying around your mental image of what you want to get away from.

If you have a mixed strategy, "away-from" motivation can be great for giving you the kick you need to get going - but it should be followed by towards in order to carry through to completion.

If you're changing a motivation strategy, always do an ecology check before removing away-from elements, as there are some things that people should move away from.

Other tips for motivation strategies that work:

Focus on the end result, rather than the slog of getting there.

> To deal with overwhelm or inertia, chunk the tasks down until they are easy to do.
>
> Motivation follows action, rather than the other way round - get started and the motivation will come!

Example of a good motivation strategy

V^C of the end result (with vivid submodalities) -> Ad "Won't it be great when this is finished!" -> positive K (motivation) and starting the task.

Key points about Learning Strategies

1. Begin in a positive state.
2. Think of a time when you succeeded and felt great.
3. Access and anchor appropriate resources.
4. Chunk appropriately. Chunk down the task to avoid overwhelm.

5. Recycle or go external until you can represent the smaller chunks, so as to sequence and prioritize them.
6. Get appropriate feedback relative to the task being learned.
7. Make appropriate comparisons that give one a feeling of accomplishment. Do not make comparisons to an expert or to an ideal self but to your ability in the past.
8. Exit but avoid the dangers of exiting too soon or never exiting. Exit when you have learned enough for right now, and when you have learned something well enough for your outcome.
9. Avoid the trap of chasing clarity. All important decisions are made on the basis of insufficient information.
10. Expect not to understand some things. Set them aside and come back to them later.
11. Don't get trapped in bad feelings of not understanding. Remember that understanding is a feeling.
12. Know your sub modality equivalents of understanding. Use them to get information in the necessary form.
13. Future pace learning to the time and place they will be needed.

Buying Strategies

Buying strategies have four components:

Motivation strategy - how you become motivated to buy something

Decision strategy - investigating and selecting from the available options

Convincer strategy - how you know that this item is the right one to buy

Reassurance strategy - how you know that you've made a good purchase so you don't suffer from 'buyer's remorse'.

Typical Problems in Decision Strategies

1. Not enough options - an 'exclusive or' mindset. "It's got to be either this or that."

2. Too many options - the strategy keeps generating options with no way to exit.

3. Some rep systems missing from the representation of options, so relevant information is not present (e.g. deciding what to eat based on just a visual representation, or missing Ad step of "Can I afford this?" when deciding what to buy).

4. Not using visual for comparing options.

5. Not going external to get relevant sensory information or check for changed circumstances, so decisions are based on outdated information.

6. No representations of consequences, so no ecology check. Moving pictures are better at representing consequences than still ones.

7. Evaluation problems:

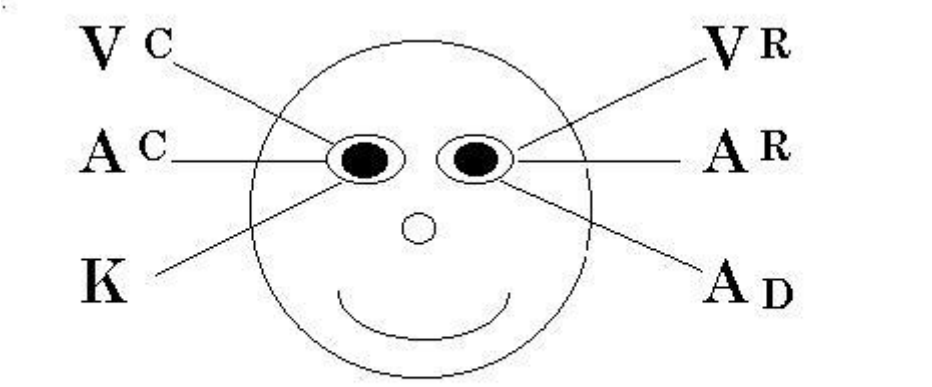
   Inappropriate or unprioritized criteria for the decision.

   Clashing values - leads to dilemma or serial incongruity.

      Don't know when to exit because the K in the decision making strategy is not strong enough.

Decision Making Strategy Exercise

Use a purchase that the person made themselves and decided to buy themselves.



EYE MOVEMENTS -- NORMAL RIGHT HANDED PERSON

Standard eye patterns for a normally organized person

Determine something that the person is wearing or owns that they were happy about purchasing. It is important that they bought it themselves and were happy with it	That's a nice …… What made you decide to buy that? Did you buy it yourself? Was anyone there when you bought it who influenced your decision to buy? Do you like it?
Track eye patterns and determine organization by asking questions and following their eyes. Also notice if they write with their right or left hand to help you.	Would you mind if I ask you a few questions which may sound a bit strange and are to serve you best? • Can you remember what your school uniform looked like? • Imagine if the sea were yellow • Say these words to yourself in a strange accent: "I'm the man/woman" • Imagine the sensation of putting your hand in a bucket of cold soup.
Elicit decision making strategy	*Use the appropriate script of do so conversationally*
Elicit convincer	How many items did you have to look at before you knew that that was the one for you?
Test the strategy. Sell them something not using their strategy (i.e. in reverse) Calibrate.	
Then sell them something in their strategy and notice the difference	

Strategy Scrambler

Identify the presenting problem – this moves them from Effect to Cause	
Elicit the strategy for creating it	How do you know it is time to ……? When do you do ……? How do you do it ……?
Make them the authority and get them to teach you how to do it	Imagine I was a temporary agency and I wanted to do …… Could you teach me?
Deliberately mismatch them and take it all the way out to the limit by changing the content and submodalities but keeping within their strategy	So firstly I get a feeling in my … big toe like a jelly fish is under it? But if I did that, would it still work? *(this gets them to try it on and scrambles their pattern)*
Continue to do this for the whole strategy until they can no longer access the feelings	

Elements in the Convincer Strategy

The Convincer Strategy is about how you convince yourself that something is true - for example, that an item or service is worth buying. It may be called up more than once in the overall buying strategy - the person may use it to decide if an item deserves to be one of the alternatives that the Decision strategy chooses between, and maybe again once the best item has been chosen to make sure it's worth buying.

There are two elements to the Convincer Strategy, both of which are examples of Meta Programs (the content-free filters we use to sort information), which we cover in full in the Master Practitioner course.

Convincer Channel (also known as Convincer Representation Filter)

What representation system do you need your information in to make a decision?

Typical elicitation question: *How do you know that a product is worth buying?*

a) See - the have to see it

b) Hear (something about it)

c) Read (something about it)

d) Do - do something or try it out

Convincer Mode (also known as 'Convincer Demonstration Filter' or just 'Convincer Strategy')

What do you do with the information that you've gathered in order to be convinced about it? How many times does something need to be demonstrated in order for you to be convinced?

Example of question to elicit: *How many times does a colleague have to demonstrate competence to you before you are convinced?*

a) Automatic (competence assumed from the start, gives the benefit of the doubt)

b) Number of times (most usually 3)

c) Period of time

d) Consistent (never completely convinced)

This is important in self-confidence – how do you know you are good at something?

Spelling Strategies

Spelling strategies that don't work well for English

Starting with a bad feeling - maybe they've been ridiculed at school for their spelling. As we know, a strong negative K can reduce someone's abilities and temporarily drop their IQ several points.

Using a phonetic strategy, sounding the word out to work out how to spell it. This would work OK in a language where the rules are very nearly perfectly consistent, such as Spanish. But English has words derived from all sorts of different languages with different rules. Even 'phonetic' isn't spelled with an 'f'.

Using Visual Construct to 'make up' the spelling. This could possibly work if you can identify what language group the word originates from and the rules that go with it - but it could still give a wrong result.

Spelling is simply a strategy, and can be changed almost instantly.

INFORMAL ELICITATION OF THE SPELLING STRATEGY

1. "When, I give you a word, what's the first thing you do inside your mind?"
2. "So first you (V/A/K). What's the next thing?"
3. "When you see/hear/feel that, how do you know that it's right?"

Make sure the strategy includes a way for them to know if the word is right. Some spellers don't have one. Get only as much detail as you need.

INAPPROPRIATE SPELLING STRATEGIES

- Begins with a feeling (Ki-)
- Phonetic - sounding it out. Only 50% accuracy.
- VC- creative spelling - piece by piece

EXCELLENT SPELLING STRATEGIES

- When asked to spell the word they may repeat it internally (Ad).
- See the word (VR) may defocus rapidly. If asked to spell backwards, they can do it rapidly.
- Feeling of familiarity or not (Ki+/-). Look for shift in breathing or gestures.

- How good of a speller they are depends on what they read.
- Secondary strategy for words for which no memory image exists (VC). If there’s no feeling of familiarity, use Visual Construct until the person gets the feeling.
- Results should create a positive Kinesthetic as a motivator for continual improvement.

Robert Dilts modelled a number of good spellers of English, and found that all of them used a common strategy. If you're a 'natural' good speller, you'll probably find that this is the strategy you've unconsciously used.

This is how to teach yourself the strategy:

1. Have the correct spelling of the word you want to learn written on a card, in lower case. It helps if you understand what the word means and the kind of context where it would be used.

2. Start with a good feeling - think of something that makes you feel good, or use an anchor.

3. Move the card up into your visual remembered area, so your eyes follow it up, staying aware of the good feeling.

4. Take the card away and notice that you can still see the word in your mind's eye, in that visual remembered position.

5. Bring the card back to the Vr position and notice that it's the same as the word you're seeing. Take it away, and continue to be aware of the good feeling.

6. Now write the letters you are seeing in your mind's eye. Check with the image in your Visual remembered any time you need to.

7. Decide if the word you've written is spelled correctly, noticing the feeling that tells you if it's right or wrong.

8. Check it against the card, correcting any letters that you need to. If it isn't the same as the card, repeat the process.

9. When you have the word spelled right, you will be able to spell the word backwards out loud by checking with the image in your mind's eye.

Note: this teaching process is adapted from Cricket Kemp's website magicalspellingunlimited.com, which has lots more useful information about the NLP spelling strategy.

The strategy itself, that you will eventually be running unconsciously if you aren't already, goes simply V^r (remembering the image of the correct spelling) and get an immediate positive feeling of familiarity - and exit the strategy. If the feeling is uncomfortable, you would look the word up or go through the steps of learning the strategy that we've just outlined.

Notice that this strategy will only help you spell words that you've seen before - so how good a speller you are depends on what you read.

Installing the Spelling Strategy

1. Ask, "Do you have any objections to being a bad speller? You understand this strategy is only for the context of spelling, right? The results of this strategy will get better the more you read. Are you willing to read more?"
2. This installation uses eye patterns.
3. Get an index card and two colored markers. Write the word "success" in two colors – red and blue – separating it by syllables: SUC · CESS
4. Hold the card in the client's VR. Ask them to take a good look at it and remember it, then to go down to K and get a good feeling of familiarity or not.
5. Take away the card. Ask them to spell the red part, then the blue part.
6. Watch their accessing cues. If they return to the old strategy, interrupt the pattern and get them up into VR. Tell them to remember the paper and read it off the paper.
7. Ask them to spell the blue and red parts, both forward and backward, randomly, 10 -15 times. At the end, they should be able to spell the entire word backward, easily and quickly.
8. Move on to bigger words with more syllables and rehearse this strategy for 10 – 15 minutes. Fire off K+ anchor each time to enhance the motivation to learn.

COMMON PROBLEMS

1. Trying to create the word while looking in Visual Remembered. "Look up here and wait until you see the word the way you have seen it before."
2. If people draw a blank, write out the word and hold it up in Visual Remember. Have them look at it and then close their eyes and see it internally as a memory image.
3. Hold the word up for a short period. If too long some people will try to describe it rather than see it.
4. Have them visualize the word on something that they can remember easily.

5. A person keeps going back to their old strategy rather than using the new one. Reframe the persistent voice. If first step is a negative K, then create a Resource Anchor (or use a dissociated-state rehearsal, if necessary).

The "Disney Strategy" For Creativity

1. Select the problem you are going to deal with. Select three places to stand: one for the "Dreamer", one for "Realist" and one for the "Critic".

2. Think of a time when you were really creative. Step into the Dreamer space and relive that time. You might want to look up to Visual Constructed. Form a visual construction (dissociated) of the most attractive compelling possibilities. At this point there are no stupid ideas - everything is valuable. Thank your unconscious mind for its creativity.

3. Break state and step into the "Realist" space. Remember a time when you put a plan into action in an elegant and effective way; when you were going to do it no matter what and determined to find the best ways to make it work. Be associated in the dream - what do you need to do to make it work? What would you do if you knew you couldn't fail? What resources would you need? Where would you make it happen? Gather all the necessary information.

4. Break state and step into the "Critic" space. Look for flaws, things that could go wrong, things you might have missed. Nitpicking is OKAY at this stage. Offer suggestions for improvement.

5. Break state and go back to the Dreamer space, incorporating your learnings from the other two positions. Recycle through the positions until the outcome is accepted in all of them.

6. If other people are involved in the dream, discover how it is for them by stepping into their shoes. If there is anything uncomfortable for them, recycle through the stages and continue to refine the dream until it works for everyone.

7. Associate and future pace. Step into the attractive, compelling possibility and experience it fully as if it is actually happening. Step back out of it, (optionally put it in your future timeline), and make it happen!

New Behavior Generator

Use this exercise when you want to:

rehearse for a forthcoming event

learn from 'failures' and develop more effective behavior for the future

install a new strategy

1. Describe a behavior you would like to be able to do, or how you would like to be able to do something better. Start from a belief and internal dialogue of 'I can do this'.

2. Go into V^C and create a movie of yourself doing the new behavior the way you want. Add sound so that you see and hear yourself. Adjust the movie until you are satisfied with the new behavior.

3. Step into the 'movie' and check how this feels (K). Make any further adjustments you need to until you feel the way you want.

4. Future pace extensively – see yourself using the new behavior in 3 or more opportunities in the future (V^C) to generalize the new ability out.

New Behavior Generator Refinements

Use a role model: In steps 2 and 3 you can use a 'role model' who you know can do the desired behavior well. Run a movie of that person performing the behavior (Step 2) and then 'become' that person in Step 3. Then repeat Steps 2 and 3 with yourself in the movie, making any changes you need to.

Use resources from your past: if you have dealt with similar situations well in the past, see yourself doing that (V^r) and then transfer that skill into the new situation (V^c).

Chunk the behavior down: if you need to, chunk the desired behavior down into smaller steps and run through Steps 2 and 3 on each.

Use a timeline: lay a timeline out on the floor. See yourself enjoying the results of the desired behavior and place this goal on the timeline. Step into it, get the good feelings, and notice the steps and any new behaviors associated with them leading up to the successful achievement of this goal.

Step off the timeline and notice where each new behavior step is on the timeline. Repeat Steps 2 and 3 for each new behavior. Finally walk up the timeline from now, associating into each step, until you reach your goal. Store your goal and the new behaviors associated with it wherever feels right for you.

Create alternatives: at Step 2 ask your unconscious mind to create at least 3 options for new behaviors. Try out each and select the most appropriate.

How to use Strategies in Therapy
("Teach me how to do it")

Richard Bandler used the process of elicitation as a way of loosening up the client's strategy for having the problem - see the transcripts of client sessions in 'Magic in Action'.

"I constantly joke with clients about their problems in order to cure them of seriousness, which is what locks the model down. You get serious, you get stuck. Humor is the fastest way to reverse this process. As soon as you can laugh about something, you can change it." - Richard Bandler, www.youtube.com/watch?v=UFFOdsUJI7U

The object is to loosen up the client's model of the world, not to 'cure' the problem - although the client may let go of the problem during the process.

1. Let the client describe the problem, at the same time establishing rapport and introducing humor. Use meta-model questions as needed to get when and where they run the problem. Their description will give you indications of their belief systems around the problem (modal operators, cause and effect patterns, complex equivalences).	Rapport and pacing is key to this process. If you get too funny too fast, the client will think you are not taking them seriously.
2. Ask "If I had to fill in for you for a day, so one of the parts of my job would be to have the problem, what do I have to do? You're the expert - teach me how to do it... What's the first thing I have to do?"	This has two useful effects: a) the client was expecting you, the 'expert', to tell them what to do (and perhaps sit in judgement on their failings) - now they are cast in the empowering role of the expert, and you are merely the pupil b) it gives the client some distance from the problem - now it's happening to you, not them

3. Elicit each step of the strategy, but 'play dumb'. Mess up the submodalities of each step, like this: Client: "You've got to tell yourself 'Oh my God, he's had an accident on the way over'" You: "OK... No, I must be doing it wrong, I'm still not feeling anxious. Will it still work if I'm talking to myself in a quiet, calm voice?" Client: "No! You've got to say that to yourself in a loud, panicky voice!" You: "OK - so if I want to have this problem correctly, I have to avoid at all costs using a quiet, calm inner voice..."	When you play around with the submodalities, you are giving the client alternative ways out of the strategy at each step. Note: when you ask "Will it still work if I...?" the client has to try out the new version on themselves in order to answer the question. If you were just to say "Try saying it to yourself in a quiet, calm voice" they might reject the suggestion without trying it first.
4. Keep eliciting until you have the whole of the strategy (i.e. you can reproduce the problem in yourself, as long as you use the client's submodalities for each step). Check if the client can still do the problem, and what has changed.	If you can make the client laugh, you know you are getting somewhere.

By the end of this process you have the client's strategy for having the problem, and their 'map' of the problem has loosened up somewhat, maybe completely. At the very least this will make any later interventions easier.

Notice how the process elicits the problem strategy and scrambles it at the same time. It illustrates the thin line between elicitation and installation.